

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 309 - MAY 4, 1977

NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

1. ISRAEL. IN THE FINAL TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE MAY 17 ELECTION DAY, THE POLLS PREDICT A PLURALITY FOR THE LABOR ALIGNMENT AND A RESPECTABLE THIRD PLACE SHOWING, AFTER LIKUD, FOR YADIN'S DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE (DMC). THIS RESULT SHOULD LEAD TO THE FORMATION OF A LABOR-DOMINATED GOVERNMENT UNDER SHIMON PERES. THE CAMPAIGNING CONTINUES TO GIVE ISRAEL'S GRAVE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES RELATIVELY SUPERFICIAL TREATMENT.

2. THE STRATEGY OF THE LABOR ALIGNMENT IN PREVENTING ITS TRADITIONAL SUPPORTERS FROM STRAYING TO LIKUD OR THE DMC INCLUDES PLAYING UPON FEARS OF A LIKUD VICTORY AND

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CLAIMING THAT A VOTE FOR THE DMC IS REALLY A VOTE FOR THE LIKUD. THIS EFFORT HAS BEEN AIDED BY THE DMC'S FAILURE TO INCLUDE ORIENTALS AND WORKING CLASS ISRAELIS ON ITS KNESSET LIST, AND BY THE LIKUD'S CONTINUING INABILITY

TO PROJECT AN IMAGE AS A CREDIBLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE ALIGNMENT.

3. WHILE THE ALIGNMENT CONTINUES TO SUFFER FROM THE IMPACT OF NUMEROUS SCANDALS, LABOR'S TRADITIONAL HOLD ON ISRAELI SOCIETY SEEMS LIKELY TO INSURE ITS RETENTION OF A PLURALITY, THOUGH A REDUCED ONE, IN THE NEW KNESSET. THE MOST RECENT PUBLIC OPINION POLL GIVES THE ALIGNMENT A SEVEN-POINT LEAD OVER THE LIKUD, A DROP IN LIKUD'S SHOWING. THE DMC'S SLIPPAGE, AS REFLECTED IN THIS LATEST POLL, HAS REACHED THE POINT WHERE 10-12 KNESSET SEATS SEEM A MORE LIKELY EXPECTATION THAN THE 20 OR SO PREDICTED EARLIER.

4. CAMPAIGN POLLS HAVE REVEALED AN UNUSUALLY HIGH PERCENTAGE OF VOTERS IN THE "UNDECIDED," "ABSTENTION" AND "WON'T SAY" CATEGORIES--40 IN THE MOST RECENT SURVEY. THIS SUGGESTS THE POSSIBILITY OF AN UPSET VICTORY BY LIKUD. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS WILL OCCUR, HOWEVER. OUR PRESENT ESTIMATE IS THAT THE ALIGNMENT SHOULD WIN 40-45 SEATS, THE LIKUD 30-35, THE DMC 10-12, AND THE NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY (NRP) 9-10.

5. AN ALIGNMENT-DMC-NRP GOVERNMENT WOULD BE THE MOST LIKELY OUTCOME OF THE COALITION BARGAINING AFTERWARDS. AN ALIGNMENT-DMC COALITION WITH SEVERAL SPLINTER PARTIES, OR AN ALIGNMENT-DMC MINORITY GOVERNMENT WOULD BE LESS LIKELY POSSIBILITIES.

6. ISRAELI UN AMBASSADOR HERZOG TOLD OUR NEW YORK MISSION THAT PERES, AS ACTING PRIME MINISTER, HAS ASSEMBLED A NEW
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WORKING GROUP FOR THE PURPOSE OF PREPARING CONCRETE PLANS ON A MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT. (CONFIDENTIAL)

7. WEST BANK. A 15-YEAR OLD ARAB BOY WAS KILLED YESTERDAY WHEN AN ISRAELI SOLDIER FIRED ON WEST BANK DEMONSTRATORS AT A VILLAGE NORTH OF NABLUS. THREE OTHER VILLAGERS WERE WOUNDED LATER IN THE DAY WHEN ISRAELI TROOPS FIRED ON A GROUP PROTESTING THE KILLING. IF THE PAST PATTERN IS FOLLOWED, THIS INCIDENT MAY SPARK A NEW WAVE OF LARGE-SCALE DEMONSTRATIONS THROUGHOUT THE WEST BANK. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

8. SYRIA. AS THE MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENTS CARTER AND ASAD IN GENEVA LATER THIS MONTH DRAWS CLOSER, A BRIEF LOOK AT SYRIA'S SITUATION IN THE DISENGAGEMENT AND PEACE PROCESSES SEEMS IN ORDER. IN OUR OPINION, THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT CONSTRAINTS ON SYRIAN FLEXIBILITY, AT

LEAST BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS.

THEY INCLUDE:

--THE SYRIAN PRESS, IN ITS EARLY BUILD-UP FOR THE ASAD-CARTER MEETING, HAS SAID THAT SYRIA "WILL NOT BARGAIN" OVER PALESTINIAN RIGHTS OR FOR LESS THAN A COMPLETE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL.

--ASAD, THE TOUGHEST NEGOTIATOR AMONG THE ARABS, IS UNLIKELY TO CONCEDE MUCH AT THIS EARLY STAGE, PREFERING TO HOLD ON TO HIS OPTIONS FOR ACTUAL NEGOTIATIONS.

--UNLESS THE SYRIANS RECEIVE REAL CONCESSIONS FROM THE ISRAELIS, DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS WILL KEEP ASAD FROM BEING FORTHCOMING.

9. SYRIAN INTEREST IN CONVEYING A SIGNAL OF FLEXIBILITY AND MODERATION MAY BE ILLUSTRATED IN CONNECTION WITH THE
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UPCOMING RENEWAL OF THE MANDATE OF THE UN DISENGAGEMENT OBSERVER FORCES (UNDOF) ON GOLAN. CONTRARY TO THE SITUATION AT THIS TIME LAST YEAR, THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS THAT SYRIA INTENDS TO SEEK "POLITICAL CONCESSIONS" FOR AGREEING TO ANOTHER SIX-MONTH EXTENSION OF THE UNDOF, WHICH EXPIRES ON MAY 30.

10. AS EARLY AS MID-MARCH 1976, THE SYRIANS EMPHASIZED THE "LINKAGE" BETWEEN THE EXTENSION OF UNDOF AND POLITICAL CONCESSIONS ON PALESTINIAN ISSUES. WHILE THE NATURE OF THIS LINKAGE WAS NOT PRECISELY DEFINED, THE SYRIANS STATED THAT THEY EXPECTED SOMETHING IN RETURN FOR AGREEING TO THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF UNDOF ON THEIR TERRITORY. ASAD FINALLY AGREED TO RENEW THE MANDATE AFTER SECRETARY GENERAL WALDHEIM MADE A PERSONAL TRIP TO DAMASCUS. LAST NOVEMBER DURING THE HEIGHT OF THE LEBANESE CRISIS, THE SYRIANS MADE A RATHER HALF-HEARTED ATTEMPT TO ALTER THE RESOLUTION RENEWING UNDOF BY ADDING LANGUAGE CALLING ATTENTION TO THE "UNSTABLE AND POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS" SITUATION UNLESS REAL PROGRESS WERE MADE TOWARD A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT.

11. THIS YEAR, IN CONTRAST, WE BELIEVE THAT THE SYRIANS WILL NOT MAKE AN ISSUE OF THE RENEWAL. UNDOF COMMANDER MAJOR GENERAL PHILLIP TOLD THE ISRAELI UN REPRESENTATIVE THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO INDICATIONS FROM THE SYRIANS THAT RENEWAL OF UNDOF WOULD NOT GO SMOOTHLY. OF COURSE,

SYRIA IS EVEN MORE BOGGED DOWN IN LEBANON THIS YEAR THAN LAST MAY, WITH NEARLY 25,000 MEN STATIONED THERE. ASAD, IN OUR VIEW, WOULD NOT WANT TO COMPLICATE US EFFORTS TO

BRING ABOUT A MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT EARLY IN THE PROCESS AND APPEARS TO WANT TO ILLUSTRATE SYRIAN MODERATION.

12. ALTHOUGH THE RENEHAL OF UNDOF WOULD REMOVE AN OCCASIONAL SECRET

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SION FOR INCREASED TENSIONS IN THE AREA, UNTOWARD INCIDENTS CAN OCCUR AT ANYTIME. IN THIS VEIN, TWO SYRIAN MIG-17'S OVERFLEW A CORNER OF THE ISRAELI-OCCUPIED GOLAN YESTERDAY. THE IDF OPENED FIRE, BUT WE HAVE NO REPORTS OF ANY HITS.

13. ACCORDING TO A SOURCE OF OUR DAMASCUS DEFENSE ATTACHE, SOME MEMBERS OF THE SYRIAN MILITARY DELEGATION WHICH ACCOMPANIED ASAD TO THE USSR LAST MONTH ARE STILL IN MOSCOW, CARRYING OUT DETAILED DISCUSSIONS ON NEW MILITARY SUPPLY ARRANGEMENTS. THE SOURCE SAID THAT THUS FAR THE SOVIETS HAVE APPARENTLY AGREED TO PROVIDE ABOUT 150 NEW TANKS TO THE SYRIANS. THE SOVIETS HAVE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WILL NOT SUPPLY ALL THE MILITARY SPARE PARTS SYRIA HAS REQUESTED, IN ORDER TO INHIBIT THEIR TRANSFER TO EGYPT BY SYRIA. (SECRET/NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONS)

14. EGYPT-LIBYA. THE USSR HAS DECIDED TO TRY TO DETER SADAT FROM TAKING MILITARY ACTION AGAINST LIBYA. THE SOVIET DECISION COULD CAUSE A FURTHER DETERIORATION IN BOTH SOVIET-EGYPTIAN AND EGYPTIAN-LIBYAN RELATIONS. OVER THE PAST WEEK OR SO, SOVIET AMBASSADORS IN SEVERAL ARAB CAPITALS HAVE BEEN DELIVERING A STRONGLY WORDED DEMARCHE WARNING THAT THE EGYPTIAN LEADERSHIP WILL BE "RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONSEQUENCES" OF A MILITARY CLASH WITH LIBYA.

15. THE EGYPTIANS ARE REACTING BITTERLY TO THE SOVIET DEMARCHE, FOLLOWING FAHMI'S MEETING WITH THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR, THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT PUBLISHED THE SOVIET NOTE VERBATIM. SADAT THUS IS PREPARING THE EGYPTIAN PUBLIC FOR A WORSENING OF RELATIONS WITH BOTH THE USSR AND LIBYA AND IS TRYING TO ELICIT GREATER FOREIGN SUPPORT, PARTICULARLY FROM THE US, FOR EGYPT IN ITS DISPUTE WITH LIBYA.

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16. THE SOVIET NOTE CITED EGYPT'S CONCENTRATION OF

TROOPS ON THE LIBYAN BORDER, MILITARY MANEUVERS, AND THREATENING OFFICIAL STATEMENTS. MOSCOW CALLED ON RECIPIENTS OF THE NOTE SUCH AS JORDAN AND NORTH YEMEN

TO CRITICIZE EGYPT'S ACTIONS AND TO TAKE STEPS TO "PREVENT FURTHER HASTY ACTION." RECENT PRAVDA ARTICLES HAVE ALSO REFLECTED SOVIET CONCERN ABOUT THE DETERIORATION IN LIBYAN-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS.

17. THE SOVIET NOTE STOPS SHORT OF BEING AN ULTIMATUM AND DOES NOT IMPLY THE POSSIBILITY OF SOVIET INTERVENTION. THE SOVIETS HAVE THEIR OWN CONCERNS ABOUT QADHAFI'S RECENT BEHAVIOR, AND THEY PRESUMABLY WOULD WANT TO AVOID ANY MOVE ON BEHALF OF LIBYA THAT WOULD HELP SADAT AT HOME. ANY SOVIET MOVE WOULD HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST WHERE QADHAFI IS NO HERO AND WHERE THERE ARE SUSPICIONS REGARDING SOVIET INTENTIONS. THE USSR WOULD ALSO BE CONCERNED ABOUT HOW THE US MIGHT RESPOND AND PRESUMABLY WOULD EXPECT A NEGATIVE US REACTION TO DIRECT SOVIET INTERVENTION ON BEHALF OF QADHAFI. (CONFIDENTIAL/NOFORN) VANCE

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